

Rock Player

by Bill Creighton

Clasped tightly together and resting on the table, his hands trembled softly.

On his left hand, two gold bracelets shone with a faint silver.

He separated his hands momentarily to spin the larger of the two chains, his motions slow and instinctive.

The same hand paused momentarily to center his sunglasses before returning to the safety of the other's clutch.

The solitary light, centered directly above the small table, did little to illuminate the rest of the room.

Somehow, even in the dimness of the room, the sunglasses did not seem out of place, but merely in character.

A black leather jacket hung crumpled from the back of the chair.

The light reflected and formed white streaks along the upper folds of the jacket.

His chest rose and fell in even measures.

A deep breath preceded a sigh.

A golden earring swung like a pendulum from his left ear.

One hand reached to toy with the earring momentarily.

Pausing to run his fingers through his hair, he shifted restlessly back into the chair.

He rested one arm on the chair and extended the other out to the table, his fingers tapping out a nervous rhythm.

He wore a long-sleeved, black, silk shirt over a light grey tank top.

One sleeve of the shirt slipped down off of his shoulder, but distantly centered attention prevented adjustment.

Faded blue jeans patched with leather wound down through the metal legs of the table and chair until disappearing into his boots.

The boots were long and black, ending just above his knees.

Gold and silver bands, straddling each boot at the heel, chimed flatly as he tapped his foot in rhythm with his hand.

He moved one hand to his mouth, placing a finger on his bottom lip.

He mouthed some indecipherable word or phrase.

Pausing mid-sentence, he pushed the table away with one hand and removed his glasses with the other.

Black metal gave way to cold, blank, gleamless eyes - blue, yet shadowed.

He stirred restlessly in his chair.

He rose quickly from the chair as if arriving at some conclusion.

His glasses rolled to and fro in his fingers, reflecting the light at the peak of each swing.

Once again he ran his fingers through his hair.

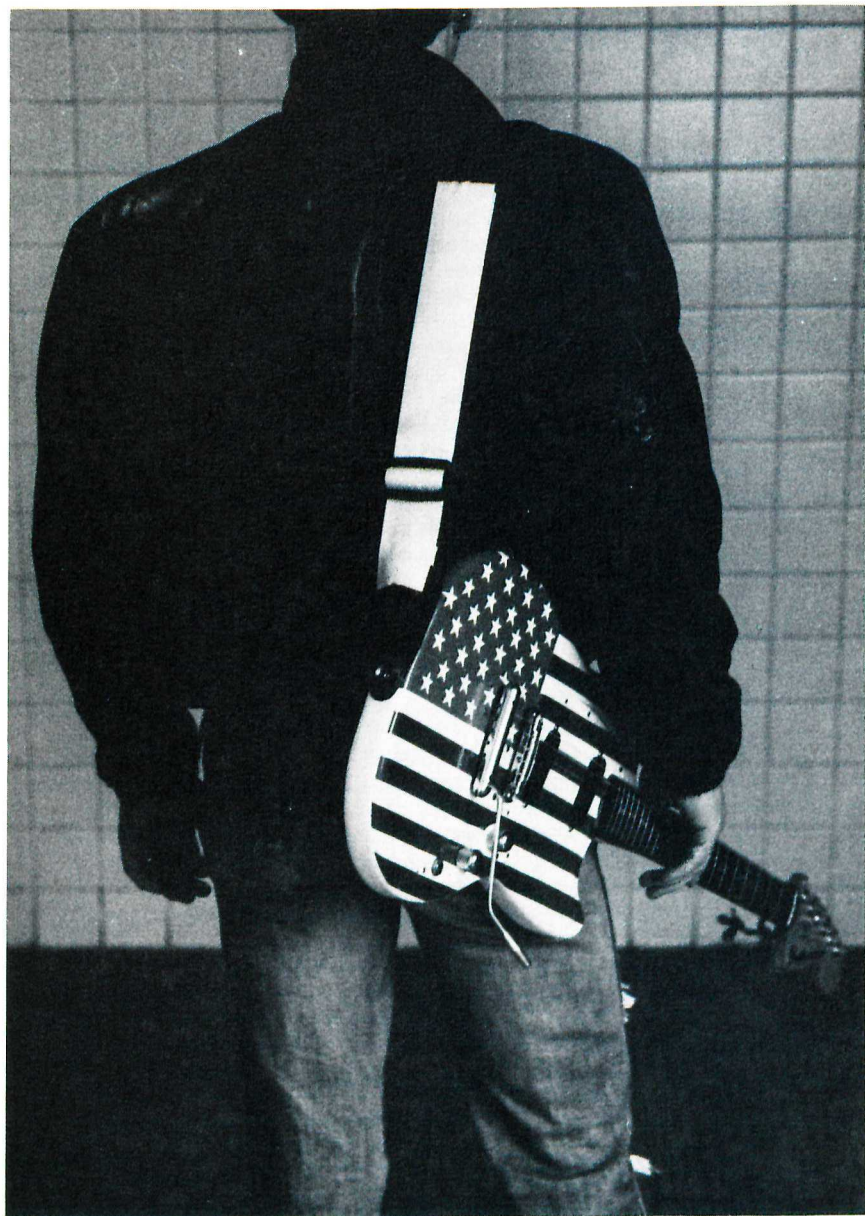
Again.

As he replaced his glasses, he stepped quickly toward the table, snatching his jacket from the back of the chair.

Donning the jacket, he strode toward the door.

The heaviness seemed to leave his face.

Pausing at the door to draw a deep breath, he snapped up the collar of his jacket and opened the door, flipping off the light as the door closed slowly behind him.



The soft pounding of his boots on the carpet broke into a rhythmic clatter on the tiled floor.

Posters and multi-colored pages pasted to the walls flashed the names of musical groups.

New Order.

Dangerous Boys.

The Heartbreakers.

Spellbound.

He smiled.

He had always known Spellbound would be the name of his band.

Michael Logan and Spellbound.

One dream down.

The corridor widened and released its hold as he turned to the right.

The fluorescent lights passed overhead in $\frac{3}{4}$ time with his footsteps.

He had written his first song in $\frac{3}{4}$ time.

Desperate Heart.

His favorite song.

He drifted back.

Please woman believe . . . it's only me . . . I'm out here alone and it's cold.

He sang the words aloud.

His pace slowed.

His smile fading, he closed to a stop.

Pain.

He had written that song for her.

He reached into his jacket to a gold cigarette case.

No, not cigarettes.

Cocaine.

Sustenance.

She wouldn't have it.

She hadn't let him do a lot of things.

Only because she had loved him.

He thought of her often.

He wondered if she thought of him at all.

Moving to lean against the cold cement wall, he dislodged the Spellbound poster to send it fluttering downward.

He traced the paper's downward flight with his eyes.

Traced his downward flight with his mind.

He wondered if he should call her . . .

And wondered . . .

And wondered.

He slid his glasses off to wipe his eyes, but had to hesitate.

He squinted at his reflection in the gold case, but couldn't make it out.
So.

Sometimes when he looked into a mirror he didn't know who was staring back.

Sometimes he didn't want to know.

He slipped the case back into his pocket.

Glasses.

Hair.

He had a show to do.

Madison Square Garden.

Two dreams down.

He moved and the lights picked up their $\frac{3}{4}$ time.

He sang,

I've lived alone . . . and I've grown so tired . . . of watching all my dreams grow old.

Other voices cramped his solitude and his song,

He turned into the dressing room, brightly lit and occupied.

Spellbound.

Spellbound and women.

One woman too few.

Greetings.

He wound his way through instruments to the opposite corner of the room and a battered metal chair.

See you in hell was etched into the paint.

He dropped into the chair and let his legs take their place on the counter in front of him.

His boots prevented him from seeing himself in the mirror.

So.

The excitement in the room penetrated and eased his spirit.

Or did it?

He smiled anyway.

Watching the others in the corner of the mirror reminded him of the way he used to be—full spirited, energetic, and dream laden.

The seriousness of his pondering prompted him to remove his sunglasses.

He folded the glasses and set them on the counter without concentrating on his actions, his eyes transfixed and distant.

Once again his smile faded.

The voices in the room faded.

So much time had passed . . .

Much time had passed . . .

Time had passed . . .

Had passed . . .

Passed . . .

Submersion complete.

Minutes later, a pounding on the door restored reality.

He dropped his feet to the floor and turned.

Ten minutes until showtime.

His guitar caught his eye as he turned back toward the mirror.

It was decorated with an American flag.

The bright colors and the chrome shone with an intensity he adored.

The guitar brought back his smile as he thought back to the time he had made it.

So what if there were too many stripes and not enough stars.

He laughed softly, causing the others to turn.

He smiled at them and they returned it, wary of what might have caused the outburst.

Tilting his head back, he lost his concentration in the lights.

Only for a moment.

He snapped to attention and to his feet.

This was it.

He moved toward the door and grabbed his guitar.

Glasses.

Hair.

Showtime.